

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 DHA-05

/088 W

-----115860 061722Z /40

R 061242Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0615

INFO AMEMBASSY DAESSALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY MASERU POUCH

AMEMBASSY MBABANE POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MOPS, BC, RH

SUBJECT: GOB OFFICIAL ON RHODESIAN AGGRESSION AND BDF

REF: (A) GABORONE 1823, (B) GABORONE 1808, (C) GABORONE 1799

1. SUMMARY: IN SEPTEMBER 1 STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT, GOB MINISTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND INFORMATION DANIEL KWELAGOBE ACCUSED RHODESIA OF HAVING "VIRTUALLY DECLARED WAR ON BOTSWANA". HE POINTED TO ESTABLISHMENT OF BDF AS BOTSWANA'S PRIMARY RESPONSE TO RHODESIAN AGGRESSION. KWELAGOBE SAID THAT BDF'S CAPABILITIES HAVE GREATLY INCREASED, ALTHOUGH IT CANNOT HOPE TO REPULSE ALL RHODESIAN "TERRORIST ATTACKS". HE REJECTED SCHEMES TO ARM PRIVATE CITIZENS IN BORDER AREAS OR PAY COMPENSATION TO INDIVIDUAL VICTIMS OF RHODESIAN AGGRESSION. SPEECH CLOSED WITH APPEAL TO BOTSWANA FOR UNITY BEHIND THEIR COUNTRY AND ITS DEFENSE FORCE. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN SUPPORT OF HIS STATEMENT THAT RHODESIA HAS "DECLARED WAR ON BOTSWANA", KWELAGOBE CITED TWENTY-FOUR "VIOLATIONS OF BOTSWANA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY" BY RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES SINCE DECEMBER 19, 1976. IN ONE RECENT INSTANCE OF RHODESIAN "AGGRESSION", HE CLAIMED THAT RHODESIAN TROOPS TRAINED SPOTLIGHT ON BDF

BUILDING ACROSS BORDER AND ATTACKED IT WITH GRENADES (AN ATTACK DESCRIBED FOR ME PERSONALLY SEPTEMBER 1 BY CABINET SECRETARY STEENKAMP).

3. ACCORDING TO SEPTEMBER 2 DAILY NEWS ARTICLE, KWELAGOBE TOLD PARLIAMENT THAT GOB'S RESPONSE TO RHODESIAN ESCALATION OF BORDER TENSIONS HAS BEEN TO CREATE BDF AND BEGIN ITS OUTFITTING AND TRAINING. HE NOTED THAT BDF NOW PATROLS FROM "TULI CIRCLE TO KAZUNGULA" AND THAT SEVERAL RHODESIAN ATTACKS HAVE BEEN REPULSED BY BOTSWANA'S FLEDGLING ARMY. ACCORDING TO KWELAGOBE, BDF IS QUICKLY DEVELOPING CAPABILITY TO CONTROL POTENTIAL CONVENTIONAL ATTACKS, BUT "TERRORIST TACTICS" USED BY RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES CANNOT ALWAYS BE COMPLETELY COUNTERED.

4. KWELAGOBE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT A "FEW INDIVIDUALS ARE BEGINNING TO CAPITALIZE ON CONTINUED UNREST ALONG THE BORDER". THESE INCIDENTS HAVE GIVEN RISE TO PROPOSALS THAT GOB ARM ITS CITIZENS ALONG BORDER AND PAY COMPENSATION TO VICTIMS OF RHODESIAN ATTACKS. KWELAGOBE REJECTED BOTH THESE PROPOSALS RE-AFFIRMING THAT GOB'S MAJOR PRIORITY IS TO TRAIN AND EQUIP BDF. IN VIEW OF BOTSWANA'S LIMITED RESOURCES, KWELAGOBE STATED THAT GOB HAS NO PLANS TO ARM ANY CIVILIANS, NOR CAN IT AFFORD TO PAY COMPENSATION IN CONFLICT WHICH MAY ULTIMATELY "ENGULF THE WHOLE COUNTRY". HE CONCLUDED WITH PLEA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT BATSWANA RESIST DIVISIVE TENDENCIES "BECAUSE IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE SHOULD FACE THE ENEMY AS A UNITED NATION".

5. COMMENT: KWELAGOBE'S SPEECH IS LATEST IN SERIES OF STATEMENTS BY GOB OFFICIALS AND PRESS ARTICLES REMINDING BATSWANA THAT THEY FACE MILITARY ATTACKS IN THE NORTHWEST. BDF IS PORTRAYED AS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE ANSWER TO RHODESIAN AGGRESSION, AND GOB'S COMMITMENT TO ARM AND EQUIP AN EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE COMES THROUGH CLEARLY. ALTHOUGH GOB STATEMENTS HAVE SOMETIMES TENDED TO OVERSELL BDF'S STILL LIMITED CAPABILITIES, ITS VERY EXISTENCE IS CLEARLY BOTH A POINT OF PRIDE AND A DEMONSTRATION OF DECISIVE ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT TO MEET A UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED EXTERNAL THREAT.

6. HOWEVER, PROPOSALS THAT GOB ARM ITS PRIVATE CITIZENS ARE EVIDENCE THAT PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN BDF IS NOT YET UNIVERSAL. KWELAGOBE'S REJECTION OF SUCH DANGEROUS SCHEMES IS PREDICTABLE SINCE GOB AUTHORITIES ARE ALREADY HARD PRESSED TO KEEP ORDER IN MANY PARTS OF THE NORTHWEST. IN PLACES LIKE TRADITIONALLY SENSITIVE FRANCIS-

TOWN AREA, THE POTENTIAL FOR VIGILANTEISM AND INTERNECINE CLASHES WOULD BE GREATLY INCREASED IF WEAPONS WERE DISTRIBUTED TO PRIVATE CITIZENS. GOB'S REPLY TO SUCH PROPOSALS AND TO GENERAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT SECURITY IS TO MAKE THE BDF A REALITY AND TO URGE ALL BATSWANA TO RALLY AROUND IT AND LEAVE TO IT THE DEFENSE OF THE COUNTRY AND PEOPLE. GOB HAS BEEN QUICK TO RECOGNIZE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VALUE OF A NATIONAL ARMY AS A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL UNITY. HOWEVER, THIS MEANS THE BDF MUST BE EFFECTIVE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS AS FORCE FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL UNITY WILL ULTIMATELY DEPEND ON HOW WELL IT IS TRAINED AND EQUIPPED. THE FACT THAT THE GOB HAS TURNED TO US FOR "EQUIPMENT" IMPLICATES US IN WHETHER THE BDF SUCCEEDS IN ITS TASK.

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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